



## Cabinet Employee Back from Iraq

**J**ohn Callihan, Branch Manager for District 5, has just returned from a 15 month tour of duty as a Captain with the U.S. Army National Guard (3 months training

stateside and 12 months in Iraq). It seemed almost biblical that John served as a Battalion Chaplain for the 891st Engineer Combat Battalion; the group was stationed at Tallil Air Base in Southern Iraq – Ancient City of Ur, birthplace of Abraham.

While most people take for granted being able to spend time with their families, John has treated every moment with his wife, Susan, and his daughters, Laura and Anna as precious gifts since his return. “The hardest part was being away from family,” says John. “I feel very blessed that God, my church, and my friends looked out for my family. I also feel fortunate that I was able to make new friends among soldiers and support personnel while in Iraq.”

Although conditions were tough, John says he was fortunate to have some modern conveniences. “I was lucky enough to be able to e-mail home almost every day and I was able to call a few times each week. On a lighter side, I found myself much more interested in following sports, like the NFL. Following trivial things like that helped soldiers feel connected to home and allowed our minds to focus on something less serious than our mission.”

On his first day back at District 5, January 10, John was greeted by his co-workers along with (pictured left to right) Chief District Engineer Barry Sanders, Deputy Secretary Jim Adams, Secretary Bill Nighbert and Commissioner Marc D. Williams. He was also presented with

an award proclaiming him an Honorary Kentucky Colonel. “Apparently Secretary Nighbert has the power to do what the U.S. Army can’t by turning a captain into a colonel,” joked John.

John Callihan has a strong sense of duty, not just to his country, but his family and friends as well. “My daughters made three requests before I left: 1. I had to write a lot of letters; 2. I had to send some gifts; 3. I had to take them to Disney World once I returned.” John was more than happy to fulfill the last request a few weeks ago. “This experience has caused me to appreciate my family and friends even more.”

This was John's second tour since September 11, 2001. His first tour, which he was called up for, was part of homeland security and he was stationed in Kentucky. For his second tour, John made the decision to go. The U.S. Army expressed they were short on chaplains and asked if he was willing to go to Iraq. He said his first tour was for country and his second tour was for God.

